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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze the results of the mediational process of the press to discover how much and in what ways press reports of Agnew's speeches differed from his original speeches. Comparisons were made between the coverage produced by the press reports and manuscripts of Agnew's speeches in order to discover how much of the original speech remained in the press reports, what thematic content remained, and what stylistic content remained. In addition, democratic and republican newspapers were compared on these same three dimensions. Conclusions were that the newspaper reports of Agnew's speeches accurately reflected the themes, the style, and the emphasis of his original speeches; the opposition (democratic) newspapers generally contained longer, more thoroughly detailed reports with more direct quotations, more paraphrases, more prominent placements, and more often provided complete texts of Agnew's speeches than partisan (republican) newspapers; and Agnew's repeated charges that the liberal (democratic) press contained unfair, inaccurate, and distorted reports of his speeches were not supported. (Author/RB)

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PRESS MEDIATION IN THE DISSEMINATION OF VICE PRESIDENT SPIRO T. AGNEW'S CAMPAIGN SPEECHES OF OCTOBER 19, 1969 TO NOVEMBER 3, 1970

by

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INTRODUCTION

In 1969 the Vice President of the United States, Spiro T. Agnew, specifically criticized that the American press was unbalanced and unfair in their reports to the public. Agnew stated, "I kept looking for a balanced expression of opinion in the news media, and I didn't find it." When asked for particular criticisms in an interview, Agnew replied:

> One of the things that distresses me more than anything else about the handling I've had and what I call this 'big-city, liberal media' is that they're intellectually dishonest in their reporting.[1]

The association between national political leaders and the American press has always been an adversary relationship and politicians throughout American history have been critical of the press. Traditionally, vice presidents have had the assignment of defending the Administration by attacking its detractors. But Agnew, unlike perhaps any other politician in history, gained national attention with his criticisms. In 1969 the importance of the mass media had become highly publicized and Agnew's constant accusations that the liberal press was unfair and inaccurate in their reports emphasized that importance. In fact, by the time of the 1970 off-year election campaign, Agnew's repeated criticism of the press had grown into a popular campaign issue. Although it was recognized by many observers that some distortion was inevitable in press reports of political figures' speeches, Agnew charged that the liberal press was particularly unfair and inaccurate. The issue is, "Was Agnew correct?" Although it is obvious that the speeches given by politicians are not the exact speeches reported in the press given the inherent filtering elements of the mediational process, how much difference is there between a speech by Agnew and a press report of that speech? In what way is the "second speech" of the press report different and are there major, important, distinctive differences?

In an article entitled "Rhetorical Studies for the Contemporary World," Samuel L. Becker states:

> A rhetorical theory for today, or a critic of contemporary communication or public address, must consider the factors that shape messages as they are diffused among various publics.[2]

During the mediational process, newspapers and newspaper reporters in our modern society perform various functions which in turn act to "shape" the ultimate messages received by the public. Marshall McLuhan argues that how the message is presented determines the message, i.e., "the medium is the message." Becker addresses himself to this same point:

> If the aim of our rhetorical scholarship is to explain the functions of discourse in our society and the effects of that discourse, it may be even more important to analyze broadcasting and newspaper treatment of the speeches and writings of public figures than to analyze the original discourse. (Italics mine.)[3]

Research Design and Procedure

Regardless of one's viewpoint of Vice President Agnew's role as Administration spokesman during the off-year election campaign of 1970, he was a prolific speaker. The author wrote Herbert L. Thompson, former press secretary of the Vice President, and requested copies of Agnew's speeches furing the time period of this study--October 19, 1969 to November 3, 1970. Thompson sent a total of ninety-nine speeches.[4]

In order to make a careful study of Agnew's campaign speeches manageable, ten speeches were selected for study. The selection criteria included careful consideration of chronological factors, geographical representation, audience factors, and speech topics. Thus, the selected speeches reflected topics which received national attention, were chronologically distributed through the campaign, and were geographically distributed across the nation. Audience factors were relatively constant because all ten speeches were presented to partisan

audiences. After these criteria were applied, the following ten speeches were selected:

(Date)	(Location)	(Topic)	(Audience)
10/19/69	New Orleans, La.	Demonstrations	Citizens' Testimonial Dinner
11/13/69	Des Moines, Iowa	Television	Midwest Regional Republican Committee Meeting
11/20/69	Montgomery, Ala.	Newspapers	Montgomery Chamber of Commerce
4/28/70	Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.	American Universities	Fla. Republican Dinner
5/22/70	Houston, Texas	Escalation of Rhetoric	Tex. Repub. Fund Raiser
9/14/70	Las Vegas, Nev.	Drugs	Nev. Republican Dinner
9/15/70	Albuquerque, N.M.	Radical Liberals	N.M. Republican Dinner
9/25/70	Milwaukee, Wis.	Permissiveness	Wisconsin Republican Dinner
9/30/70	Salt Lake City, Utah	Pornography	Utah Republican Dinner
10/9/70	Phoenix, Arizona	Radical Protest	Arizona Republican Dinner

Press mediation in the dissemination of these speeches was the major focus of the study. Thus, twelve newspapers were selected for the purpose of making comparisons of press reports of the speeches. The selection criteria for the newspapers included representational factors of geographical location, political endorsement, ownership, and size. With these criteria in mind, the following twelve newspapers were selected from a list of the largest United States daily newspapers. No two newspapers in the sample were owned by the same company and all twelve were geographically distributed. Half of the sample was labeled Democratic and half Republican on the basis of the newspapers' political endorsement of presidential candidates during the 1968 election campaign.[5]

DAILY NEWSPAPERS SELECTED FOR STUDY[a]

Political[b] Endorsement During 1968 Election	Newspaper	Daily Circulation[c]	Geographical Region[d]	Time of Publication
Republican	Los Angeles Times (LAT)	981,661	Pacific	morning
Democrat	New York Times (NYT)	814,290	Mid-Atlantic	morning
Republican	Chicago Tribune (CT)	745,210	E. North Central	morning
Republican	Detroit News (DT)	650,180	Mid-west	afternoon
Democrat	Washington Post (WP)	510,688	South Atlantic	morning
Republican	Cleveland Plain-Dealer (CPD)	409,935	East Central	morning
Democrat	Boston Record-American (BRA)	369,873	North East New England	morning
Democrat	St. Louis Post-Dispatch (SLPD)	320,611	W. North Central	afternoon
Republican	Houston Post (HP)	289,301	Southwest	afternoon
Democrat	Atlanta Journal (AJ)	256,359	Southeast	afternoon
Democrat	Denver Post (DP)	250,990	Mountain	afternoon
Republican	Portland Oregonian (PO)	241,670	Northwest	morning

[a]Data from 1972 Editor and Publisher Marketing Guide (New York: The Editor and Publisher Company, 1972).

[b]Ibid., 1968 quadrennial poll (see 1968 edition of Editor and Publisher).

[c]Data from N. W. Ayer and Sons' Directory: Newspapers and Periodicals, 1972.

[d]Ibid.

After the selection of the ten speeches and twelve newspapers, microfilmed copies of each newspaper were carefully examined on the day prior the speech, the day of the speech, and the day after the speech. The press reports of the newspapers for each speech were then photocopied from microfilmed copies of the newspapers secured through The University of Michigan Library's Inter-Library Loan Department. The analysis focused on the results of the mediational process of the press to discover how much and in what ways the press reports of Agnew's speeches differed from the original speeches. The primary purpose was to compare the "second speech" produced by the press reports with Agnew's original speech texts. In general, descriptive and historical methods were utilized in these comparisons. Throughout the study, the "original speeches" and the "press reported speeches" were compared on the grounds of these three dimensions: (1) comparisons concerning relative length, the relative magnitude of quoted and paraphrased content, (2) the thematic similarities and differences, and (3) the stylistic similarities and differences. A secondary purpose was to compare Democratic and Republican newspapers on these same three dimensions.

From Agnew's first involvement in political activity in Baltimore in 1957, through his first fifteen months as Maryland's Governor, Agnew generally received the support of the press. He was perceived as a liberal, progressive, young politician. But much of the liberal, progressive impression was an artifact of his campaign against old, conservative opponents. The contrast of Agnew and his political opponents made Agnew appear more progressive and liberal than he proved to be. Thus, when he delivered a speech to black leaders following the Baltimore riots of early April, 1968, he experienced his first major criticism from the press. Later, as a vice presidential candidate, Agnew felt that the press was unfair when they reported a comment he made during what

he considered a private informal conversation with reporters abroad his campaign plane. Agnew had referred to a Japanese-American reporter on the plane as a "Fat Jap." The headlines of many newspapers accused Agnew of insensitivity. The incident compounded the ill will and feelings of hostility between Agnew and the press. Agnew's hostility continued to grow throughout the 1968 campaign. After his successful election as Vice President, Agnew often criticized the press and accused them of unfairly reporting his speeches. Such criticism came to a focal point during the 1970 off-year election campaign.

The mediational activity of the press in disseminating the speeches of the campaign to the national audience was considered as an added complexity in the already complex communication paradigm. Although Agnew spoke to partisan Republican audiences, an examination of the themes which dominated his speeches indicated that the majority of his messages were also designed for and directed to the larger national audience, often referred to as the "Great Majority." Internal evidence from the speeches supported this observation. In order to reach the national audience, Agnew depended primarily on the press (only the Des Moines speech was nationally presented on radio and television). Since all press reports were inherently incomplete summaries of his speeches, Agnew was able to criticize the press for what he called unfairness and to point to incomplete press reports as evidence of his criticisms. Perhaps what Agnew called unfairness was the normal selectivity of press reports, which invariably produced a product that was incomplete.

Agnew was aware of the mediational process of the press. He designed his messages to appeal not only to the audiences of committed, partisan Republicans, but to the larger public audience. In order to reach the national audience, Agnew delivered his messages in a stylistic manner which provoked the attention of press reporters. The employment of epithets, alliteration, and

other stylistic devices aided Agnew in his attempts to obtain a wide national audience through press exposure. Thus, the press reporters served as interposed media agents to convey the messages to the national audience through their press reports. This multistep process was important to Agnew as evidenced by the fact that he typically directed the majority of his messages, almost ninety per cent, to the national audience.

I-Comparisons: Length, Coverage, Accuracy, Placement, and Availability of Complete Texts

Ratio of Words/Report to Words/Speech

Table 1 provides a summary of the relative length of the press reports in terms of the proportion of words in the press reports to the words in the speech manuscripts. As can be seen in Table 1, Democratic newspapers contained longer reports in seven out of ten speeches. Typically, Democratic papers

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Table 1 about here

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reported more descriptive information concerning Agnew's speeches and provided a fuller, more detailed account of the speech content.

Press Coverage of Speech Content (Quoted and Paraphrased)

Table 2 provides a summary of the proportion of speeches quoted and paraphrased in the press reports. Democratic press reports contained the highest percentage of coverage in eight out of ten speeches. Although the over all

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Table 2 about here

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differences between the amount of quoted material contained in Democratic reports compared with Republican reports was not great, the results were consistent; the Democatic papers generally contained more quotations from Agnew's speeches than Republican papers. This is an interesting finding since it serves as evidence

to dispel the popular myth that partisan newspapers cite more quotations of their candidate than opposition newspapers. The finding in this study was just the opposite; the Democratic, or opposition press, quoted Agnew more often than the partisan Republican press. Possible explanations include the fact that for the Democratic papers to fairly criticize Agnew required the inclusion of Agnew's statements. In addition, as noted by Robert Marsh, the liberal press tends to give extra space to those it opposes in order to avoid the charge that it discriminates anywhere but on the editorial page.[6] Finally, "liberal reporters and news editors add to the coverage even more, because, cynics though they are, they labor in the belief that the more exposure to the ills of society, the more likely the citizenry will turn to something better."[7]

Accuracy of Press Reports

Quoted and paraphrased material contained in the press reports was compared sentence by sentence with the original manuscript of the speech in each case. The results were surprising. Contrary to what might be expected, the analysis of the press reports revealed a high degree of accuracy for both quoted and paraphrased content. In no instance was a clearly inaccurate quotation or paraphrase revealed. Occasionally the press reports contained minor spelling errors, spacing errors, or sometimes a transposition of letters or words, but no consistent pattern or scheme emerged to indicate anything other than human error or a typographical error. Even such minor errors as these were not prevalent. One must conclude that charges of inaccuracy in terms of quoted and paraphrased material are not supported by the facts in connection with these particular speeches by Agnew. The investigation revealed that the newspapers were accurate in their quotations and paraphrases of Agnew's speeches.

There are at least five reasons for this finding. First, the press was provided with advance copies of the Vice President's speeches which eliminated manual shorthand renderings. Second, Agnew rarely deviated from his manuscript, in fact, he invariably read his speeches. Third, newspaper reporters have access to modern technological advances such as portable tape recorders and various electronic recording devices. Fourth, the modern newspaper reporters involved in covering the speeches of Agnew and other national political figures exhibited a professional caution in regard to quoted and paraphrased material, particularly after Agnew's criticisms of inaccurate reporting. And finally, the wire service reporters of the Associated Press and United Press International, both major sources for the press reports, provided accurate initial reports of Agnew's speeches.

On the other hand, it should be recognized that Agnew's criticisms of inaccuracies were not limited to quoted and paraphrased material from his speeches. Rather, Agnew often criticized how his speeches were interpreted, what aspects were emphasized, and most importantly, what sections were omitted. Thus, distortion by omission was characterized by Agnew as typical of the liberal press's "inaccuracies."

Placement

The placement of a report within the newspaper is a decision made by the editor. Clearly, a story given front page exposure is considered outstanding in terms of appeal, attention factos, and importance. A press report of one of Agnew's speeches buried in a third or fourth section on page sixty-seven surrounded by "filler" material obviously would have been considered less important than a press report of an Agnew speech appearing in the middle of page one. Using the data recorded on "Press Report Analysis" sheets, Table 3,

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Table 3 about here

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summarizes the placement of each of the ten press reports for all twelve papers. The total number of Agnew's speeches which made the first page was exactly the same for both Democratic and Republican papers; both reported speeches on the front page of their respective papers a total of nineteen times. In addition, the investigation revealed that thirty-seven of the thirty-eight instances of front page exposure were limited to the first five Agnew speeches. Perhaps the most probable explanation for the consistency of placement was that Agnew's New Orleans speech propelled him into national attention. His criticisms of demonstrations hit a responsive chord of American public opinion and the pro and con arguments kept his name alive in the mass media. Thus, when the announcement was made that Agnew was going to speak on the topic of television in the Des Moines speech, the newspapers gave him even more front page exposure. Two-thirds of the Democratic papers and two-thirds of the Republican papers gave Agnew's Des Moines speech front page coverage. In his Montgomery speech, Agnew criticized the press and again, the press responded with two-thirds of the Democratic papers and all six of the Republican papers giving the speech front page attention. As can be observed in Table 3, the Democratic and the Republican papers continued to be quite consistent in their front page coverage of Agnew's speeches; four out of six Democratic and five out of six Republican papers reported Agnew's Ft. Lauderdale speech on page one and four Democratic and three Republican papers reported Agnew's Houston speech on page one. After the Houston speech, interest exhibited in Agnew's speeches in terms of front page exposures dropped drastically to almost zero. Only one newspaper, the New York Times, gave any other speech within the sample population front page coverage. The Cambodian invasion without congressional approval, the massive anti-war demonstrations, and the Kent State tragedy, among other events, tended to push Agnew off the front page. In

addition, Agnew had, by the end of May, expounded on all general campaign themes so that subsequent speeches were perceived as repetitious political rhetoric which did not merit front page exposure. The newspapers continued to cover Agnew's campaign speeches as the campaign progressed and there was consistency in terms of placement on pages other than page one by both Democratic and Republican newspapers as illustrated in Table 3.

Availability of Complete Texts in the Press

The speeches of Agnew's 1970 campaign were presented to partisan Republican audiences who attended various fund-raising dinners. Only about ten per cent of those speeches ultimately reached the public in terms of the press reports. However, on a few occasions, the complete text of some of Agnew's speeches were also contained in the newspapers along with the press reports. Yet rarely did the complete texts accompany the press report on the same page. The reason was largely a matter of space limitations and practicality. Obviously, if complete texts were presented on page one there would be little or no room for other news items. From a practical viewpoint, most people probably do not read complete texts, preferring instead to read a press report version which offers a brief summary and analysis. Typically, if complete texts were supplied by the newspapers, there was an accompanying note in the press report indicating the section and page number where the complete text could be found.

Since the present study considered reports of ten speeches by twelve different newspapers, there was a total of one hundred and twenty opportunities for the press to make complete texts available to the public. Only in fifteen instances did the newspapers provide complete texts. This is slightly more than twelve per cent of the time. Agnew's attack on student demonstrators and protestors following the November 15, 1969, march on Washington created national

interest in his speeches. Partly due to this increased interest, but more importantly, due to the fact that in the next two speeches, his Des Moines attack on television and his Montgomery attack on newspapers, his subjects concerned the media, one-half of the Democratic newspapers and one-half of the Republican newspapers provided complete texts of those two speeches. In speeches four and five, only the Democratic papers, namely, the New York Times and the Washington Post, provided complete texts. As illustrated in Table 4, no other speech texts

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Table 4 about here

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were provided by the sample newspapers. Again, the point at which no more complete texts were provided corresponds with the fifth speech of May 22, 1970, and supports the earlier statement that Agnew's interest value for the press dropped sharply at the end of the fifth speech.

In summary, Democratic newspapers were found to provide more thorough reports of Agnew's campaign speeches than Republican newspapers in terms of length of reports, quotations, paraphrases, placement, and provision of complete texts.

II-Thematic Analysis

The ten speeches selected for study contained twenty-four themes and one hundred and eighty-two subthemes. However, a careful analysis revealed that many of the themes and subthemes were in fact repetitious and could be arranged in fewer categories. Thus, a more concise conceptualization of thematic content was revealed, a multi-theme formula based on a three-part sequence of general themes integrated with a fourteen-part sequence of specific themes as indicated in Table 5. Three broad general themes were identified as "Youth,"

Table 5 about here

"Media," and "Administration Defense." In addition, fourteen specific themes were identified as "demonstrations," "draft," "college education," "drugs," "opposition criticism," "morality," "television," "newspapers," "liberalism," "entertainment," "military," "political," "domestic," and "reasoning." It was discovered that Agnew always used one or more of the three general themes which he related either directly or indirectly with one or more of the fourteen specific themes.

In some individual cases, the press reports omitted major thematic portions of both general and specific themes. For example, this happened in the reports of Agnew's New Orleans speech. Only thirteen per cent of the speech content was reported by the press. Thus, a major portion of the speech, which concerned the general theme of "Administration Defense" and the five specific themes of "draft," "opposition criticism," "military," "political," and "domestic" were omitted from the reports. In this respect, the press reports misrepresented Agnew's speech through distortion by omission. A possible explanation for the omission was that the majority of the speech was "boilerplate" material which had been repeatedly used before. Thus, the old material was ignored for the new. However, when one considers all ten speeches, the press reports transmitted the general and specific thematic content. Finally, the comparison of press reports revealed that there were no major differences with respect to coverage of thematic content by the Democratic and Republican newspapers.

III-Stylistic Analysis

This section focuses on the style of Agnew's speeches. A frequent observation of the general public, particularly after the New Orleans "effete snob" speech, was that Agnew "really had a way with words" or "that Agnew can really turn a phrase." In all probability one can assume that such statements reflect

judgments which were based in part on a perceived image of Agnew as presented in the press reports of his speeches. The question or problem here is to determine if the press reports reflected Agnew's characteristic style, or if the general public's image of Agnew's style, that is, "a man of words," was a product of the newspapers' practice of seizing the "sensational" or "unusual" aspects of his speeches and thus exaggerating his stylistic qualities. Several of the authors who have written books about Agnew, Jules Witcover, Paul Hoffman, and Theo Lippman, Jr., for example, suggest such press mediation since they report that far from the image of Agnew as a witty, colorful wordsmith, his speeches were characteristically dry and boring.[7] But Agnew, the most talked about Vice President in the history of the United States, became a household word primarily because of how he said what he said. Style rather than substance became paramount as learned men, political analysts, writers, and reporters attempted to analyze the Vice President's style. Hugh Sidey of Life magazine compared Agnew's prose with the famous Sage of Baltimore, H. L. Mencken.[8] But Gerald W. Johnson, regarded by some as the successor of Mencken, called it "Menckenoid" rather than "Menckonian"--an imitation of Mencken's style "without a vestige of his wit, his learning, or his shrewd perception."[9]

A careful analysis of stylistic features of the sample speech population revealed seven prominent traits employed by Agnew. These seven traits included alliteration, epithets, qualifiers, parallel structure, antithesis, polarities, and questions. Some of the more obvious examples of each of these traits from the sample population were identified and the press reports were examined to see if these traits were present or absent.

A summary of all seven stylistic traits and the sample newspapers which transmitted each trait in their press reports of Agnew's speeches is provided in Table 6. In terms of the selected sampling of each of the seven traits, the most frequently preserved were as follows (frequencies expressed in percentages): polarities (78%), epithets (75%), questions (39%), antithesis (35%), alliterations (33%), qualifiers (22%), and parallel structure (14%). There was no observable difference between the total frequency of preserved stylistic traits across all Republican newspapers and the total across all Democratic newspapers. In terms of these particular stylistic traits, the Los Angeles Times preserved more of the stylistic traits most often among the Republican newspapers and the Denver Post preserved more of the stylistic traits most often among the Democratic newspapers.

Conclusions

This study indicates that, in general, the press reports of twelve of the largest newspapers in America faithfully reflected Agnew's speeches during the 1970 off-year election campaign. Proportionally, no major differences exist in the press reports in terms of emphasis, theme, or style when compared with Agnew's speech texts.

Democratic newspapers contained longer, more detailed reports with more direct quotations, more paraphrased content than Republican newspapers. In addition, Democratic newspapers gave more prominent placement to their reports and provided complete texts of Agnew's speeches more often than Republican newspapers. Thus, a person interested in keeping most informed about Agnew's speeches would be advised to read Democratic newspapers instead of Republican newspapers. However, in all instances the differences were only slight differences in favor of Democratic newspapers. In terms of the criteria and types of measurements used in this study, no major differences exist between Republican

and Democratic newspapers. Thus, no major differences were found between Democratic and Republican reports nor between the collective reports and the speeches of Agnew's 1970 campaign.

In terms of comprehensive, detailed press reports of Agnew's speeches, the New York Times emerged as the best Democratic newspaper and the Los Angeles Times the best Republican newspaper.

To the extent that the samples of both newspapers and speeches were representative, the following specific conclusions were supported by the study and appear to be tenable:

(1) The newspaper reports of Agnew's speeches faithfully reflected the themes, the style, and the emphasis of his original speeches. Although some newspapers ignored some of the "boilerplate" portions of some of the speeches, that is, those portions which tended to be repetitious throughout the campaign, in general, the public received reports which faithfully transmitted the themes, style, and emphasis depicted in Agnew's actual speeches.

(2) Opposition (Democratic) newspapers generally contained longer, more thoroughly detailed reports with more direct quotations, more paraphrases, more prominent placements, and more often provided complete texts of Agnew's speeches than partisan (Republican) newspapers. Although there were more similarities than differences in Democratic and Republican reports and although the study found no major differences in any individual item of investigation, the overall picture indicates that contrary to Agnew's charges and contrary to popular opinion, Democratic newspapers granted more thorough coverage to Agnew's speeches than Republican newspapers.

(3) Agnew's repeated charges that the liberal (Democratic) press contained unfair, inaccurate, and distorted reports of his speeches were not supported here. In general, the study found no substantial evidence that the

American press contained unfair, inaccurate, or distorted reports. Neither the "big city liberal /Democratic/ opposition press" nor the partisan Republican press contained unfair, inaccurate, or distorted reports. In fact, Agnew received more thorough reporting of his speeches from the very newspapers he accused, the liberal Democratic press.

NOTES

[1]"Agnew Tells Why He Says What He Says," U. S. News & World Report, November 17, 1969, p. 20.

[2]Samuel L. Becker, "Rhetorical Studies for the Contemporary World," in The Prospect of Rhetoric, ed. by Lloyd F. Bitzer and Edwin Black (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 28.

[3]Ibid., p. 29.

[4]In a personal letter to the author, which accompanied the manuscript copies, Thompson indicated that there were even more speeches delivered by Agnew during this time period and that more could be secured if necessary. Personal letter from Herbert L. Thompson, Assistant to the Vice President, dated January 25, 1971. The majority of the manuscripts received were photocopies of typescript, some photocopies of Agnew's "reading copies," which were in larger than usual typescript, and some photocopies of speeches printed in the Congressional Record.

[5]The source for the list from which the sample was drawn appears in the New York Times Encyclopedic Almanac of 1970, p. 489. The author wishes to thank Miss Irene Hess and Professor John R. Robinson of the Survey Research Center of the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, for their assistance in the sampling procedures for this study. The political affiliation was based on the quadrennial poll of newspapers conducted by Editor & Publisher, November 2, 1968, pp. 9-12. In terms of the present study, this particular poll was of obvious interest, but it is interesting to note the relative consistency of the political affiliation over a period of several presidential elections.

[6]See Robert Marsh, Agnew The Unexamined Man: A Political Profile (New York: M. Evans and Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 150-51.

[7]Ibid., p. 152.

[8]See Jules Witcover, White Knight: The Rise of Spiro Agnew (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 137 and p. 224; Paul Hoffman, Spiro! (New York: Tower Publications, 1971), p. 14 and p. 106; and Theo Lippman, Jr., Spiro Agnew's America (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1972), p. 163.

[9]Hoffman, p. 112.

[10]Ibid., See also, Martin Mayer, "The Brilliance of Spiro Agnew," Esquire, May, 1970, p. 205.

Table 1

Relative Length of Press Reports
Based on
Proportion of Words/Press Report to Words/Speech

	Newspapers	Speeches[1]									
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
DEMOCRATIC	DP	3	44	45	16	11	19	18	8	11	16
	AJ	1	27	36	13	17	21	18	0	13	0
	BRA	7	15	36	10	19	13	13	11	0	0
	WP	15	23	31	26	21	23	16	14	14	36
	NYT	14	41	41	12	30	22	12	33	16	34
	SLPD	9	12	41	14	27	12	15	5	9	24
REPUBLICAN	LAT	7	25	59	21	17	13	12	13	15	36
	CT	8	8	21	15	34	10	0	6	15	23
	DN	3	38	58	14	12	0	16	0	14	0
	PC	9	21	18	12	14	13	0	0	13	13
	CPD	2	25	32	13	27	9	8	8	12	16
	HP	7	31	32	6	35	0	0	13	2	0

[1]The numbers in parentheses refer to the sample of ten speeches in chronological order. All other numbers represent ratio percentages of the number of words contained in the press reports to the number of words contained in the speech manuscripts. Underlined numbers represent the highest percentage rankings for each individual speech. All number values have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 2

Proportion of Speech Quoted and Paraphrased in Press Reports

	Newspapers	Speeches[1]									
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
DEMOCRATIC	DP	2	13	27	9	8	14	2	4	5	4
	AJ	0	14	25	11	10	16	2	0	1	0
	BRA	6	10	29	7	10	10	2	10	0	0
	WP	13	16	21	18	12	12	1	11	0	5
	NYT	10	14	26	6	23	9	1	27	6	21
	SLPD	6	7	28	11	22	6	7	4	2	11
REPUBLICAN	LAT	6	19	25	16	12	10	0	9	0	14
	CT	7	5	14	2	26	10	0	5	5	6
	DN	2	20	24	8	8	0	12	0	1	0
	PO	6	15	15	9	11	10	0	0	0	4
	CPD	1	21	21	10	22	7	0	6	1	1
	HP	3	21	24	4	17	0	0	12	1	0

[1]The numbers in parentheses refer to the sample of ten speeches in chronological order. All other numbers represent percentages of speech quoted and paraphrased in press reports. Underlined numbers represent the highest percentage of quoted and paraphrased content for any one speech. All number values have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 3

Page Placement of Press Reports

Newspapers		Speeches[1]										
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	Totals[3]
DEMOCRATIC	DP	7[2] LC	*1 LB	*1 CB	*1 CB	2 CT	8 CB	8 RT	2 CT	16 LC	5 RT	3
	AJ	23 LT	*1 CB	*1 RC	20 LT	*1 LC	8-C LT	16 LT	-	13 RT	-	3
	BRA	4 RT	5 RT	2 LT	4 LB	2 LB	4 LB	3 LC	9 LT	-	-	0
	WP	*1 C	*1 LC	*1 RB	*1 LC	*1 RB	6-A LT	2-A CB	2-A RT	2-A RT	2-A C	5
	NYT	*1 LB	*1 LC	*1 TC	*1 RB	*1 LC	18 CT	95 CT	*1 C	22 RT	10 LT	6
	SLPD	14-A LC	2-A LT	2-A LT	*1 RB	*1 LC	7-A CT	20-A CT	8-A LT	4-D CT	7-A RT	2
REPUBLICAN	LAT	26 LT	5 TC	*1 CB	*1 RB	*1 RB	5 CT	17 LT	14 LT	18 LC	9 CT	3
	CT	7 TC	*1 LT	*1 C	*1 LT	*1 LB	4 CT	- -	6 C	23 CT	4 LC	4
	DN	10 LT	*1 BR	*1 LC	2-C LT	5-A CT	-	4-C CT	-	8-B LT	-	2
	PO	*1 C	11 CT	*1 RC	*1 LC	7 CT	4 RT	-	-	10 LT	5 C	3
	CPD	4-A LB	*1 CT	*1 RT	*1 C	2-C CT	2-B CT	2-B LT	2-B LT	7-A C	8-B RC	3
	HP	8 RB	*1 RB	*1 C	*1 C	*1 LC	- -	- -	5-A LT	17-C RC	- -	4

19

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[1]The numbers in parentheses refer to the sample of ten speeches in chronological order.

[2]The top row of numbers indicates the page number of the press report. Those letters placed beside some numbers indicate the section; thus, 8-C indicates page 8 of section C. Asterisks indicate page one placement. The lower row of letters indicates the placement on the page; B=Bottom, C=Center, L=Left, R=Right, and T=Top.

[3]The totals refer only to page one placement totals.

Table 4

Page Placement of Complete Texts Published in Newspapers of Sample

Newspapers		Speeches[1]										
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	Totals[2]
DEMOCRATIC	DP		45-D C	43 LC								2
	AJ											0
	BRA											0
	WP		23-A LT	6-A LC	23-A LC	14-A RC						4
	NYT		24 RC	22 RT		32 LT						3
	SLPD											0
												9
REPUBLICAN	LAT											0
	CT		1 LT	7 C								2
	DN		14-D RT									1
	PO			29 RT								1
	CPD		16-A LT	12-A CT								2
	HP											0
												6

[1]The numbers in parentheses refer to the sample of ten speeches in chronological order. All other figures and letter combinations indicate the page, section, and positioning of the text for that particular newspaper.

[2]The totals column refers to the total number of instances in which a particular newspaper made complete texts of Agnew's speeches available.

Table 5

GENERAL THEMES:	SPECIFIC THEMES:
(I) Youth	1. demonstrations (protest, dissent)
	2. draft
	3. college education
	4. drugs
	5. opposition criticism
	6. morality (decency, obscenity, pornography)
(II) Media	7. television
	8. newspapers
	9. liberalism/permissivism
	10. entertainment (movies, theater, songs, festivals)
(III) Administration Defense	11. military
	12. political
	13. domestic
	14. reasoning (logic, debate, rational process of dialogue)

Table 6

The following Table summarizes all seven stylistic traits and indicates which newspapers transmitted each selected example from Agnew's speeches:

		L A T	C T	D N	P O	C P D	H P	(R) (Sum)	D P	A J	B R A	W P	N Y T	S L P D	(D) (Sum)	(Total)
polarities	Des Moines	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	X	X		X	X		4	10
	Ft. Lauderdale	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	X	X		X	X		4	10
	Houston	X		X	X	X		4	X	X			X	X	4	8
epithets	New Orleans	X	X	X	X			4	X	X		X	X	X	5	9
	Ft. Lauderdale	X		X		X	X	4	X	X		X		X	4	8
	Houston	X		X	X		X	4	X	X	X	X	X		5	9
questions	Des Moines	X			X	X	X	4			X				1	5
	Montgomery	X						1	X		X		X	X	4	5
	Milwaukee						X	1	X		X	X		X	4	5
antithesis	Des Moines			X				1							0	1
	Montgomery	X	X	X		X		4	X	X		X	X	X	5	9
	Milwaukee	X				X		2					X		1	3
alliteration	Ft. Lauderdale	X						1	X	X				X	3	4
	Milwaukee		X				X	2			X		X		2	4
	Las Vegas					X		1	X	X		X	X		4	5
qualifiers	Des Moines	X		X		X	X	4	X	X					2	6
	Montgomery	X				X		2							0	2
	Las Vegas							0								0
parallel structure	Des Moines							0							0	0
	Montgomery					X		1						X	1	2
	Milwaukee						X	1			X		X		2	3
	*frequency per newspaper	13	5	9	6	11	9	53	12	10	6	8	11	8	55	108

* All X's represent the presence of selected prominent examples of the seven stylistic traits in particular speeches which were also found to be present in particular "press reports" of those speeches.

ABSTRACT

PRESS MEDIATION IN THE DISSEMINATION OF VICE PRESIDENT SPIRO T. AGNEW'S CAMPAIGN SPEECHES OF OCTOBER 19, 1969 TO NOVEMBER 3, 1970

by

Jerry K. Frye

The purpose of this study was to analyze the results of the mediational process of the press to discover how much and in what ways press reports of Agnew's speeches differed from his original speeches. Comparisons were made between the "second speech" produced by the press reports and manuscripts of Agnew's speeches in order to discover how much of the original speech remained in the press reports, what thematic content remained, and what stylistic content remained. In addition, Democratic and Republican newspapers were compared on these same three dimensions.

Ten speeches were selected from a population of ninety-nine manuscript copies of Agnew's 1970 off-year election campaign speeches. The selected speeches were chronologically distributed throughout the campaign, reflected topics which characterized the national attention granted to Agnew, and were geographically distributed--each speech was given in a different state. Audience factors were relatively static since all ten speeches were presented to partisan Republican audiences.

Twelve newspapers were selected from the largest circulating United States dailies. No two newspapers in the selected sample were owned by the same company and all were geographically distributed. Half of the sample were labeled Republican and half were labeled Democratic on the basis of the newspapers' political endorsement of presidential candidates during the 1968 election campaign. The six Republican newspapers included the Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Detroit News, Portland Oregonian, Cleveland

Plain-Dealer, and Houston Post. The six Democratic newspapers included the Denver Post, Atlanta Journal, Boston Record-American, Washington Post, New York Times, and St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Microfilmed copies of each newspaper were used and the initial press report of each Agnew speech for each newspaper was photoduplicated. Thus, the comparisons of the press reports with Agnew's speeches were derived from descriptive and historical research methods.

To the extent that the samples of both newspapers and speeches were representative, the following specific conclusions were supported by the investigation and appear to be tenable:

(1) The newspaper reports of Agnew's speeches accurately reflected the themes, the style, and the emphasis of his original speeches. Although some newspapers ignored the "boilerplate" portions of some of the speeches, i.e., those portions which tended to be repetitious throughout the entire campaign, in general, the public received reports which accurately presented the themes, style, and emphasis depicted in Agnew's actual speeches.

(2) Opposition (Democratic) newspapers generally contained longer, more thoroughly detailed reports with more direct quotations, more paraphrases, more prominent placements, and more often provided complete texts of Agnew's speeches than partisan (Republican) newspapers. Although there were more similarities than differences in Democratic and Republican reports and although the study found no major differences in any individual item of investigation, the overall picture indicates that, contrary to Agnew's charges and contrary to popular opinion, Democratic newspapers granted more thorough coverage to Agnew's speeches than Republican newspapers.

(3) Agnew's repeated charges that the liberal (Democratic) press contained unfair, inaccurate, and distorted reports of his speeches were not supported in this study. In general, the study found no substantial evidence that the American press contained unfair, inaccurate, or distorted reports. Neither the "big city liberal /Democratic/ opposition press" nor the partisan Republican press contained unfair, inaccurate, or distorted reports. In fact, while Republican reports were accurate, Agnew received more thorough reporting of his speeches from the very newspapers he accused--the liberal, Democratic press.